

Rep. John Carter testimony  
Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform  
Member Day hearing  
June 27, 2018 at 12:25 p.m. in HVC 210

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, while I applaud the Committee's work to evaluate ways to improve the budget and appropriations processes, I appear today to join my fellow appropriators to emphasize how important it is to conduct the appropriations process on an annual basis while maintaining the integrity and independence of the Appropriations Committee.

As we have seen in the current budget agreement, it has been useful to have a two-year deal on the overall spending caps. We have been able to move from fiscal year 2018 to 2019 appropriations with minimal disruption and delay because there haven't been disagreements on overall spending.

But it is entirely different when you consider annual appropriations bills. Even one year is a long time to stay current on the latest needs for our agencies.

For example, providing an annual appropriation for military construction is key to how the Department of Defense plans its military construction projects. Each military construction project is a new start that requires a corresponding authorization for each project within the NDAA, which is done annually. These projects are determined on whether execution is possible in the fiscal year in which requested.

Additionally, some of the largest Veterans Affairs medical care programs are advance funded, but every year we have to provide "second bite at the apple" funding because VA estimates of program costs change. Funding VA once every two years would jeopardize care for veterans, when VA identifies needs after the appropriation is complete.

These are just some of many reasons why I urge the Commission not to propose biennial appropriations. Ending annual appropriations would lead to a cycle of unpopular supplementals every non-appropriations bill year.

I also caution the Committee to resist efforts to dismantle the Appropriations Committee or merge it with another committee. The appropriations process remains the most effective annual exercise of Congressional oversight. Disrupting an already challenging process would ultimately result in an erosion of Congress' Constitutionally-mandated power of the purse and impair the essential oversight the Legislative Branch must do on the spending of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars.

Additionally, it is critical to have members who specialize in the process of allocating spending while authorizers focus on policy. Any effort to comingling these jurisdictions runs the risk of watering down both the expertise of appropriators and authorizers.

Again, I appreciate the chance to express my concerns. I stand ready to work with my colleagues to bring sensible reforms that ensure the budget and appropriations processes remain effective components of ensuring taxpayer dollars are wisely spent.